

FTR

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Chairman Crisco and Chariman Megna of the Joint Committee on Insurance and Real Estate:

My name is Gina Gallivan. I am 31 years old and a resident of Wethersfield, CT.

I am here today to ask for your support of **Senate Bill 17, an act concerning wellness programs and expansion of health insurance coverage**. **My life was saved by a bone marrow transplant**, and I would like as many people as possible to be able to share a similar story. I believe that **allowing volunteers to join the bone marrow registry free of cost will promote more of these lifesaving procedures. The more people we encourage to join the registry, the greater the chance that patients will be able to find donor matches and receive bone marrow transplants.**

Four years ago, I was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia. At the age of 25, I had been married for less than one year and was employed in my current job as an English teacher at Wethersfield High School. I was coaching the high school girls' varsity tennis team and taking classes towards my Master's Degree at Central Connecticut State University. I had always been a healthy, energetic and active member of my community, and felt confident that my future looked promising and fulfilling.

My diagnosis of leukemia could not have come as more of a shock to my family or me. As an inpatient at Brigham and Women's Hospital, I underwent one month of intensive chemotherapy and radiation that led to remission. Subsequently I returned to Dana Farber Cancer Institute as an outpatient receiving weekly chemotherapy and radiation to try to keep the cancer in remission. The doctors told me that the most promising way to prevent recurrence of the cancer would be to receive a bone marrow transplant.

My family and I placed our hope in the possibility that I might find a donor match through the National Bone Marrow Registry.

When your only hope of survival is placed in the chance that a bone marrow donor match will be found, you understand immediately the value of having as many people as possible join the bone marrow registry.

I had the fortune to find a donor match, a 21-year old male. Although I do not know his name or where he lives, I do know that I am alive today because he volunteered to join the bone marrow registry. Additionally, of the numerous people who joined the bone marrow registry through a volunteer drive held for me when I was searching for a match, I know of at least four people from my drive alone who have since been called by the registry to consider pursuing bone marrow donation because they were a match for another patient in need.

The key to making my success story one of many is to find donors for patients suffering from blood cancers and disorders. **Please support Senate Bill 17 so we can encourage as many people as possible to join the bone marrow registry.** With a simple mouth swab test, they can be entered into the National Bone Marrow Donor Registry. The more volunteers we have entering the registry, the more we can help to make bone marrow transplants occur as often as they are needed to save lives.

Thank you for your consideration.